February 25, 2005

To: ABAG-BAAQMD-MTC Joint Policy Committee

Re: MTC's Draft Transit-Oriented Development Policy

The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area feels that it is now time to comment in on this issue, despite the fact that you do not yet have a proposal before you for approval.

The five regional agencies (and many cities) have already endorsed the Smart Growth Vision for the Bay Area, MTC has already adopted a Transportation Land Use Platform in December 2003, and MTC recently adopted the T2030 Plan that establishes a regional policy to "create incentives to encourage transit-oriented development around regional transit systems and mixed-use developments elsewhere, to create new and safer ways to get around ….by fostering walking and biking and connecting communities to transit." Therefore, regional policies connecting transit facilities and land use have already been established.

The key point of these land use and transportation policies is to assure that there are sufficient numbers of people near transit, and there are transit station area designs that facilitate transit use so that there is a sufficient level of ridership and a reduction the number of trips taken in private automobiles.

The LWVBA supports the attached Goals for Transit-Oriented Development. We hope that through the pending policy the JPC will endorse these goals. We do expect that by adopting these regional/funding goals, there should be some accountability by local entities (cities, counties and transit agencies) to implement transit-oriented development near new transit stations and corridors. New transit extensions should be made only to local jurisdictions that choose to endorse or implement these goals.

The basic issue under consideration at this time is what the conditions or incentives on funds or transit extensions should be established to achieve these goals?

Until the draft policy is before the Committee, we are reluctant to say specifically what the JPC should do or not to do – details are still being developed, tested, and refined. We do hope that the policy you adopt will further the general principles that are attached.

Linda Craig, President
League of Women Voters of the Bay Area

League of Women Voters of the Bay Area
supports the following
Goals for Transit-Oriented Development

Land Uses and Residential Densities Around Transit Stations and Stops
1. Improved accessibility to transit and increase transit ridership, by providing for higher density/higher intensity, walkable communities near transit stations and stops.
2. Encourage a mix of transit-supportive residential, commercial, and employment opportunities, to make transit-oriented development attractive to a wider market

Infill Housing and Housing Affordability
1. Efficiently use the land within walking distance of a transit station to provide housing, meet regional housing needs, and better encourage transit ridership.
2. Provide housing that meets the needs of people at all incomes and that includes both rental and sale units.

Retail and Office
1. Provide for neighborhood-serving retail that is primarily supported by households and office workers within the Transit Zones
2. Encourage uses with greater employment density and design that encourages transit ridership.
3. Prevent incompatible uses, such as big box and other regional retail that generates mostly vehicular traffic and discourages transit use.

Parking
1. Minimize the amount of land dedicated to parking, while still providing sufficient access to stations.
2. Encourage station access by walking, biking and transit.

Pedestrian and Bike Friendly Environment
1. Encourage transit ridership, bicycle and pedestrian activity, and access for people with disabilities by providing high levels of access, safety, and continuity for pedestrians and bicyclists in the transit area.

Approved by LWVBA Board of Directors on July 19, 2004